United Nations A/ES-10/214–S/2003/120

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
30 January 2003

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

Letter dated 30 January 2003 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to draw your attention once again to the continuing deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem. In this letter, I wish to raise the Committee's concern with regard to one particularly disturbing aspect of Israeli actions negatively affecting the rights of the Palestinian people, which has manifested itself of late.

The Committee has received several reports on the closing down by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), on 15 January 2003, of Hebron University and Palestine Polytechnic University for 14 days, ostensibly as a measure aimed at fighting terrorists and suicide bombers. IDF forces raided offices and laboratories, destroyed and confiscated property and welded shut university gates and doors. The closing has reportedly been extended to six months for the Hebron University and three more weeks, with the possibility of further extension, for the Polytechnic.

The Committee views these harsh acts of collective punishment by the occupying Power as utterly unjustified and illegal, as they deprive 4,200 students at Hebron University and 2,500 students at Palestine Polytechnic University of their right to education. These arbitrary measures also adversely affect hundreds of faculty and university staff who have lost their source of income, particularly now that the Palestinian people are experiencing severe economic hardship. The closure of the two important Palestinian educational centres is bound to deepen the anger and despair of the Palestinians living under the Israeli occupation. It sends a particularly sombre message to the Palestinian youth that their way to a better future through education is as "road-blocked" as is their daily life in the towns and villages of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It no doubt adds to the mistrust and suspicion between the two peoples and further exacerbates the already dangerous situation on the ground.

03-23191 (E) 300103

Our Committee is appalled by these developments taking place at a time when the international community, through the Quartet, is working hard to stop the violence, resume a meaningful political dialogue between the parties and move forward to a negotiated settlement, with a view to realizing a vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express the hope that you would bring these urgent concerns to the attention of the international community, including the competent organs of the United Nations, and that you would use your good offices with the Government of Israel, so that the present situation could be redressed and the two universities reopened without delay.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Papa Louis **Fall**
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People